CHANGE MANAGEMENT – CHALLENGE AND OPPORTUNITY FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF ROMANIAN COMPANIES

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ABSTRACT

Based on current management consulting practices and study of change management theories, the paper presents an overview of what are considered the most appropriate change management models for a sustainable development of Romanian companies; these companies are facing challenges generated by adverse market conditions and need for suitable managerial skills. According to several studies published in the past two decades by professionals in the field of organizational change management, most of the change projects fail (approx. 70%); the main responsible factor is represented by resistance to change coming from people involved in the process, employees and managers. There is no similar data available for Romania, where change management initiatives are few and mostly encountered in the private sector. In this view, the paper presents three of the most widely known and used theoretical models for change management: Kotter (1995), Ackerman and Anderson (2010) and Prosci-ADKAR (2006), aiming to provide professionals a starting point for the effective management of organizational change projects. These models approach change management in different ways, but all agree that managing the human side of change is the key to success. The Romanian particularity resides in our aim to identify national industries that could benefit the most from well managed change processes. The model used to meet this goal is based on the extensive research of 37,000 public and private companies from Romania, using their financial performance data from 2008 to 2013 and trying to identify industries / sub-industries with highest variance in performance.

KEYWORDS: *organizational change management, change management model, risk assessment, management challenge*

JEL CLASSIFICATION: *M10, O30*

1. INTRODUCTION

Organizational change management, as a distinct management practice, has been introduced to the world of business around the middle of the 20th century. Since then, managers and professionals have recognized that change management or "the approach to the transition of individuals, teams and organizations to a desirable future state" (Kotter, 2011), can and should be an essential managerial skill, adding value and supporting the strategic management of an organization. John Kotter (1995) points out that change happens whether we want to or not, but the choice to manage it in a structured and effective manner makes the difference between the success and failure, not only for the change initiative but also for the entire organization.
In the past few decades a great body of work has been published in the field of change management, consisting in different approaches, models, methodologies and tools. However, studies by several authors have shown a consistent pattern of failure of change management initiatives. Kotter's

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research (1995) indicates that only 30% of major change initiatives are concluded successfully and, more than a decade later, in 2009, Keller and Aiken confirm this low success rate in the *McKinsey Quarterly*, even though the use of change management methodologies has increased from 34% in 2003 to 72% in 2011 (*Change Management History*, 2013). A more recent study from Axel Uhl (2012) reports similar findings: approx. 60% of planned changes fail, mostly due to resistance manifested by employees and managers alike.

Professionals and authors agree that the main element of organizational change management that can lead to either failure or success is managing the human side of change. Any initiative that ignores the human contribution necessary in carrying out a successful change project, the human dynamic and the unavoidable human resistance to change, from employees, managers, leaders or any other stakeholders associated with the project, carries a high risk. This paper presents three of the best known change management models, all of them stressing the importance of managing the human side of change: Kotter (1995), Ackerman and Anderson (2010) and Prosci-ADKAR (2006). The methodologies and tools associated with these three theoretical models are important resources for change management professionals looking to successfully implement a change process and bridge the gap between the current and the desired state of companies.

In Romania change management has been used in the past two decades mainly in the private sector. Some trials were done in the public sector too, mostly due to the requirement of the EU for aligning with the European strategy, policies and legislation. At the moment there is an increasing interest in the academic sector, while in private companies change management is severely underused, even though it is considered a basic management skill and a requirement for general strategic management.

Taking into consideration the absence of change management, even in the circumstances of the severe and ongoing economic crisis, the author aims to develop a tool for identifying the sectors / industries that need change management acumen, establishing a method for classifying them based on the associated level of risk.

The analysis was carried out by the author based on data provided by the AnticrisisManager platform for approx. 37,000 most important Romanian companies, both public and private, covering SMEs as well as large companies, from 174 sub-industries, grouped into 34 industries. The main objective of this analysis is to identify the general level of risk associated with each sub-industry of the Romanian economy and to classify them, in order to best understand when and where change management is necessary. The model combines a set of economic parameters reported by companies (ex. change in turnover, change in employees' number, net profit margin, inventory turnover, etc.) into a single indicator of risk (variation). Each industry / sub-industry is then correlated with a risk amplitude. Risk status was calculated by weighting the variation in the evolution of the analysed parameters during the whole crisis period (2008-2013) and in the last reported year (2013).

The author proposes that applying an effective change management in these companies allows companies to better position themselves on the market by becoming more competitive and, in the long run, contribute to reducing the development gap between Romania and the other EU countries.

2. CHANGE MANAGEMENT MODELS

Since the inception of the organizational change management concept several models have been developed and published, describing the process of change, both from individual and organizational perspectives. One classification of models is based on the different categories of organizations. Taking into account the wide range of goals and particular situations, organizations are seen from different perspectives, highlighting specific organizational dimensions in different situations. Gareth Morgan (1986) suggests these approaches as descriptions or *metaphors* for the classification of organizations (Cameron & Green, 2009):

a) *machines metaphor*: organizations are machines/constructs assigned to achieve established goals or objectives; usually, this metaphor is associated with concepts such as efficiency, optimization, implementation, control, performance, authority, etc.
b) *organisms metaphor*: organizations are living organisms that continuously adapt to their environment;
c) *political systems metaphor*: organizations are described and associated with power struggles, negotiation and leadership;
d) *flux and transformation metaphor*: organizations are seen as self-regulating entities;
e) *brains metaphor*: organizations are seen as inventive and rational entities, capable of new forms of (self-)organization;
f) *cultures metaphor*: organizations are approached from a cultural perspective, having significance, rituals and taboos;
g) *psychic prison metaphor*: organizations, as well as their members, are considered to be subject to specific constraints and/or limitations and approached from this perspective;
h) *instrument of domination metaphor*: organizations are instruments of social domination, relationships being subject to asymmetrical power balance where the goals of the few are achieved by the others.

Of the eight metaphors, authors Esther Cameron and Mike Green chose four, as the most used by managers and consultants in the field, generating a classification of four types of organizations (Cameron & Green, 2009): the organization as machine, organism, political system, and flux and transformation. In Table 1 is presented a synthetic classification of the most widely known change management models, based on the categories suggested by Cameron and Green.

Table 1. Classification of change management models.

No.	Change management model	Metaphor			
		Machine	Political system	Organism	Flux and transformation
1	Lewin (1947), followed by Schein (1995)	X		X	
2	Lippitt, Watson & Westley (1958)	X		X	
3	Hersey & Blanchard (1969)		X	X	X
4	HSMC (2006)	X		X	
5	7-S (1980)	X	X	X	
6	Burke & Litwin (1992)	X	X	X	
7	Chin & Benne (1969), followed by Havelock (1971) and Nickols (2010)		X	X	
8	Bullock & Batten (1985)	X			
9	Beckhard & Harris (1985)			X	
10	Kotter (1995)	X	X	X	
11	Carnall (1991)		X	X	
12	Nadler & Tushman (1997)		X	X	
13	Bridges (1991)	X		X	X
14	Senge (1999)		X	X	X
15	Ackerman & Anderson (2001, 2010)		X	X	
16	Prosci-ADKAR (2006)	X		X	

Source: adapted from Cameron and Green (2009), p. 109.

Filtering this list in the view of current challenges faced by managers, the following three models are presented in this paper, developed by:

- *John Kotter* (1995): one of the most influential professionals in the field of organizational change. The Kotter model was the first model to highlight the importance of leadership in the successful implementation of a change process and is considered a reference for all models developed subsequently, as well as for any change manager, leader or professional.
- *Linda Ackerman Anderson and Dean Anderson* (2010): organizational change professionals with over 30 years of experience in the field. The Anderson model distances itself from the main models developed previously, considering that organizational change processes are not linear, since the people involved do not follow a linear path in understanding, implementing and maintaining changes. This non-linear approach, though time-consuming, has proven successful in practice.
- *Prosci team* (2006): a research and learning company dedicated to developing highly flexible and efficient methodologies and tools for the optimal management of change. The Prosci model considers that an organizational change begins with the change of each individual involved, and both the human and technical aspects of change require a careful and specific management approach. The Prosci methodology and tools are continuously improved based on annual research carried out by the company's team, reflecting the current economic trends and providing supporting strategic management.

2.1. Kotter Model (1995)

Harvard Business School professor John P. Kotter identifies 8 steps for the successful approach of organizational change, having also a beneficial long-term effect. Kotter warns managers and other professionals in the field that change is a *process* and not an *event*, going through several essential stages, each one depending on the previous stage and providing the foundation for the next (Kotter, 1995). In fact, major change initiatives consist of several smaller projects, or "projects within projects", each one going through the individual stages at different times, with different paces (Kotter, 1996).
Based on his extensive research, John Kotter states that approx. 70% of major change initiatives fail, linking this low success rate with failures in leadership and the lack of leadership qualities among managers. While managers are required to plan and budget, organize and staff, control and solve problems, leaders should establish direction, align people, as well as motivate and inspire them. Consequently, managers generate order and predictability, while leaders generate change (Kotter, 1996).
The 8-step model proposed by Kotter consists of the following stages (Kotter, 1995; Kotter, 1996):

1. *Establishing a sense of urgency*: examining market and competitive realities for potential crises and untapped opportunities; identifying and discussing crises, potential crises or major opportunities; convincing at least 75% of the managers that the status quo is more dangerous than the unknown;
2. *Creating the guiding coalition*: assembling a group with shared commitment and enough power to lead the change effort; encouraging the group to work as a team outside the normal hierarchy;
3. *Developing a vision and a strategy*: creating a vision to direct the change effort; developing strategies for realizing that vision;
4. *Communicating the change vision*: using every vehicle possible to communicate the new vision and strategies for achieving it; teaching new behaviours by the example of the guiding coalition (having the guiding coalition role model the behaviour expected of employees);
5. *Empowering broad-based action*: removing or altering systems or structures undermining the vision; getting rid of obstacles; encouraging risk taking and non-traditional ideas, activities and actions;

6. *Generating short-term wins*: planning for visible improvements or „wins"; creating those wins; recognizing and rewarding employees contributing to those wins;
7. *Consolidating gains and producing more change*: using increased credibility from early wins to change systems, structures and policies undermining the vision; hiring, promoting, and developing employees who can implement the vision; refuel the change process with new projects and change agents;
8. *Anchoring new approaches in the culture*: articulating connections between new behaviours and corporate success; creating leadership development and succession plans consistent with the new approach; creating better performance through customer and productivity-oriented behaviour, more and better leadership and more effective management.

The model proposed by Kotter is attractive for many managers, but provides only a shot of energy and enthusiasm in the first stages (creating a sense of urgency, creating and communicating the vision), followed by delegation and distancing, ending consolidation and anchoring in the organizational culture. Actually, the process of change requires active and energetic involvement throughout change implementation (Cameron & Green, 2009).

2.2. Ackerman and Anderson Model (2010)

Based on their 30-year long experience in the field of organizational change management, Linda Ackerman Anderson and Dean Anderson (2010) developed a *roadmap* – a guideline intended for leaders, managers and professionals implementing different types of change processes. The development of this model and its methodology is the result of consultancy work in different industries and organizations and is intended to support the successful implementation of change. The model is based on the hypothesis that a comprehensive change strategy consists of three areas:

- *Content*: the organizational and technical areas that require change;
- *People*: the mindset, behavioural and cultural changes that support the *content* changes;
- *Process*: actions necessary in order to plan, design and implement both the *content* and *people* changes, in an integrated and unified way (Ackerman and Anderson, 2010).

As with many other authors in the field, including John Kotter, Ackerman and Anderson stress the importance of the human dynamic element, considering it to be the linchpin of the change process. As such, the different aspects of this dynamic engagement, commitment, behaviour and mindset change are embedded in the change strategy from the beginning and not added as an afterthought.
The non-linear, 3-stage and 9-phase model promoted by Ackerman and Anderson (2010) consists of the following main activities and can be tailored according to the specific needs of the change process that is considered:

1. Stage 1. *Upstream change*:
    a. Phase 1. *Preparing to lead the change*: establishing a clear intent for change and the corresponding strategy for a successful change process. Phase 1 is considered to be of critical importance and includes approx. 60% of the decisions regarding the change strategy and plan. The main goals of this phase are: identifying the leadership roles necessary for the change, building the case for change, assessing the organizational readiness for change, building the individual and collective readiness for change, establishing the general strategy for change.
    b. Phase 2. *Creating the organizational vision, commitment and capability*: creating a collective intent for change and improving the capacity for change throughout the organization.
    c. Phase 3. *Assessing the situation to determine design requirements*: describing the desired state and the way to achieve the change to materialize the vision.

2. Stage 2. *Midstream change*:
   a. Phase 4. *Designing the desired state*: designing the organizational and cultural solutions for achieving the vision.
   b. Phase 5. *Analyzing the impact*: carrying out a detailed impact analysis intended to support a thorough understanding of the change process, both for leaders and employees, and securing the support of the people involved in the change.
   c. Phase 6. *Planning and organizing for implementation*: elaborating the implementation master plan, the detailed guide for achieving the desired state.

3. Stage 3. *Downstream change*:
   a. Phase 7. *Implementing the change*: implementing the master plan and applying the necessary corrections for finalizing the change process and obtaining the desired results.
   b. Phase 8. *Celebrating and integrating the new state*: once the desired state is achieved and the results are obtained, the success should be widely communicated and the organization should celebrate it. This celebration reinforces the change and ensures that all the people in the organization have adopted the new behaviours.
   c. Phase 9. *Learning and course correcting*: evaluating and learning all the lessons regarding the change process and its results, continuously improving the new state, preparing the organization for future changes and successfully concluding the current change initiative.

2.3. Prosci-ADKAR Model (2006)

The Prosci-ADKAR model and methodology were developed by the Prosci team established in 1994, the complete methodology being published in 2006 (Hyatt, 2006).
Prosci considers that effective change management is built on two integrated components:

- individual change management model: any change, on any scale, starts with the change of a single individual;
- organizational change management process: it describes the process and tools professionals use.

This blend of individual and organizational change is flexible and can be adapted to a multitude of particular cases, in different industries and on different scales.
ADKAR, the individual change management model developed by Prosci, supports the understanding, as well as the management of a personal change, whether at home, at work or in a community, considering that it is a predictable endeavour. The ADKAR model helps individuals navigate the change process by providing the building blocks of change and the questions that each one answers, as well as measuring progress, diagnosing gaps and developing corrective actions (*Integrated Individual-Organizational Approach*, 2014):

- *Awareness* of the need for change: “Why is the change happening? Why is the change happening now? What is the risk of not changing?”
- *Desire* to participate and support the change: “What are the personal motivators and organizational drivers that would cause me to support the change?”
- *Knowledge* on how to change: “What knowledge, skills and behaviours are required during and after the change is implemented?”
- *Ability* to implement required skills and behaviours: “How do I demonstrate the ability to do my job the new way? What barriers may inhibit me from making the change?”
- *Reinforcement* to sustain the change: “What will make the change stick? What are the rewards, recognition, incentives and consequences?”

The Prosci 3-phase change management process consists of the following activities (*Prosci Change Management Methodology*, 2014):

1. Phase 1. *Preparing for change*:
    a. Defining a change management strategy: assessing the size and nature of the change, assessing the organization affected by the change and conducting employee readiness assessments, developing a change management strategy;
    b. Preparing the change management team: acquiring change management resources, assessing team competencies in change management, preparing the change management team;
    c. Developing a sponsorship model: identifying necessary project sponsors, assessing sponsor positions and competencies, developing the sponsor model and preparing sponsors to manage the change;
2. Phase 2. *Managing change*:
    a. Developing change management plans: communications plan, sponsor roadmap, coaching plan, training plan, resistance management plans;
    b. Taking action and implementing change management plans;
3. Phase 3. *Reinforcing change*:
    a. Collecting and analyzing feedback: gathering employee feedback, auditing compliance with new processes, systems and roles, analyzing change management effectiveness;
    b. Diagnosing gaps and managing resistance: identifying root causes and pockets of resistance, developing corrective action plans, enabling sponsors and coaches to manage resistance;
    c. Implementing corrective action and celebrating successes: implementing corrective actions, celebrating early successes, conducting after-action reviews.

Both the individual and the organizational perspectives are necessary for an effective change management initiative. The unique contribution of the Prosci-ADKAR methodology is an integrated framework for the successful management of change, taking into account that the smallest and indispensable unit of change is the individual.

3. SECTORIAL NEED FOR IMPROVEMENT IN ROMANIA

Having in portfolio the main change management models that can be applied in a customized way, the next question that came to our mind is “where is the biggest need for an organized and well-structured approach of the change management process?” In an attempt to identify areas that demand the greatest need for change in Romania, we started from the data provided by AnticrisisManager platform, which conducted a research on the change in performance of the most important companies in the Romanian economy.

3.1 Methodology

The time horizon for the analysis was post economic crisis (2008), as this was a period characterized by various pressures from economic environment (financiers, clients, suppliers, etc.), being extremely demanding for managers and regular employees. To study the performance of various economic sectors we focused on the variation coefficients of some representative economic ratios for 174 sub-industries, grouped into 34 industries, analysing approx. 37,000 companies – top firms in each economic sector, both public and private.

The resulting model condenses a set of relevant parameters for the situation of companies from each sub-industry into a single indicator of risk (variation), each industry / sub-industry being correlated

with its risk amplitude. Risk status was calculated by weighting the evolution of the analysed parameters during the whole crisis period (2008-2013) and for the last reported year (2013).
In order to make the risk estimation, the following steps were used:

1. Selection of the most important approx. 37,000 Romanian companies, subsequently grouping them in industries (34) and sub industries (174).
2. Computation, at company level, of the most important ratios (for last year and change for the entire period) and selection in our model of the following ones, presented in Table 2:

Table2. The ratios used for developing the risk indicator

No.	USED RATIOS	FORMULA
1	Change in turnover (%) 2013 vs. 2012	$\triangle=(CA_{2013}-CA_{2012})/CA_{2012}$
2	Change in turnover (%) 2013 vs. 2008	$\triangle=(CA_{2013}-CA_{2008})/CA_{2008}$
3	Change in employee number (%)2013 vs. 2008	$\triangle=(NE_{2013}-NE_{2008})/NE_{2008}$
4	Net profit margin 2013 (%)	$NPm=NP_{2013}/CA_{2013}$
5	Net profit margin 2008-2013 (%)	See no 4
6	Receivables turnover (days) 2013	$RTurnover = (Receivables_{2013}/Turnover_{2013})*365$
7	Receivables turnover (days) 2008-2013	See no 6
8	Inventory turnover (days) 2008-2013	$ITurnover = (Inventory_{20xx}/Turnover_{20xx})*365$

3. Detailed analysis on the results from Step 2, according to particular situations, in order to eliminate outliers (abnormal accounting treatments, reporting errors, business reorganizations, etc.) choosing normal boundaries for each ratio within each industry. Trimmed values oscillated between 5%-15% of population, depending on industry type.
4. Calculation of variance coefficients for ratios of each (sub-)industry
5. Aggregation of ratios variance coefficients for each (sub-)industry, using a weighted average based on compounding coefficients of 10-15%, depending on associated importance.

3.2 Results and analysis

In the end, for a more intuitive understanding of the results at industry level, the risk coefficients were divided in 4 groups (with similar number of members). Industries with lowest degree of general variation from the average were: Public Administration and Defence, Forestry, Healthcare, Agriculture, Transportation, Pharmaceuticals, Business services, Professional services, Shows and entertainment activities. Doing deep-dives on sub-industries, the coefficient of variation showed results varying between 1.0 (Education) and 48.1 (Hunting activities), approx. 65% of sub-industries being under the 5.0 threshold.
Dividing the entire number of industries in 4 segments we are getting the following split, presented in Table 3:

Table 3. Industry segmentation, examples and corresponding observations.

No.	Risk coefficient	No. industries	Examples of industries	Observations
1	<2.8	9	Public Administration and Defence, Forestry, Healthcare, Pharma, Professional Services	Industries with limited nr of companies, state owned and aligned; multinational companies with good management skills
2	2.8-4.4	8	Chemistry, Financial services and Insurance, Industrial activities, Auto	Industries with larger number of companies, with some differences in size and market experience

No.	Risk coefficient	No. industries	Examples of industries	Observations
3	4.4-8.2	8	Textiles, Clothing/Shoes, Energy, Food industry, Retail	Sectors influenced by managerial skills to follow the right market in the right way – selling to dynamic markets
4	>8.2	9	Real Estate, Beverages, Constructions, Media, Tourism	Sectors highly exposed post crisis, where managerial skills are key success factors

From a sub-industry perspective a relatively balanced segmentation can be presented as follows in Table 4:

Table 4. Sub-industry segmentation, examples and corresponding observations

No.	Risk coefficient	No. sub-industries	Examples of sub-industries	Observations
1	<2.1	42	Education, Passenger transportation, Retail of medical equipment, Postal services, Jewellery production	Sub-industries with transparent markets, where clients' demand and managerial practices are easy to observe and follow
2	2.1-3.5	45	Self-care products, Travelling apparel and leather products, Rubber products fabrication. Printing, News agencies	Economic sectors were R&D, market penetration, brand and investments play important roles
3	3.5-6.4	43	FMCG, Other commerce activities, Grapes production, Media agencies, Energy trading	Sub-industries were a direct and efficient connection with the client is a must
4	>6.4	44	Newspapers publishing, Paint production, Trading of non-food products, Real estate agencies, Glass and ceramic production	Subsectors influenced by technology/rapid changes in market trends or selling to shrinking markets;

Overarching hypothesis is represented by the idea that, in economic sectors with the largest variation in performance parameters of main players, there is:

- a big difference between management skills of the leading teams;
- limited understanding of the evolution of the economic sector, as a whole, and/or of the direct competitors;
- a diverse alignment of the companies with current economic environment (in general) and with their economic sector conditions (in particular);
- a strong influence of some special factors that increase the performance gap in the respective sub-industry.

Under these circumstances, sectors with the greatest discrepancy (variation) of the business parameters are the sectors with the highest risk, triggering the highest need for attention and change. Simplifying, change can be done at two levels:

- from the less favourable zone to the average one (companies that need to improve the activity and bring the performance parameters close to the average of the sector);
- from the average to the most favourable zone (sector offers opportunities for obtaining exceptional results, fact proven by the existence of companies with very good results).

3. CONCLUSIONS

Organizational change management has become an increasingly necessary and strategic management skill since the middle of the 20th century, for any leader or manager. The corresponding body of work elaborated in the past decades, consisting of theoretical models and methodologies, guidelines and tools, as well as extensive research data, has grown in size and insight, providing professionals with all the necessary background and support for delivering successful change projects and results.

In this context, it is surprising that the success rate is consistently low; it has been reported to be around 30%, from several different sources, indicating as the main factor resistance to change for employees and managers alike. In an effort to provide support for change management professionals, managers and leaders, from a theoretical and practical point of view, the paper presents a classification of the most widely known change management models, based on Gareth Morgan’s organizational metaphors (1986), choosing three of them for a more in-depth description, including their main hypothesis and advantages. The three theoretical models presented are developed by know professionals in the field of change management, with proven track record in delivering successful change projects: John Kotter (1995), Linda Ackerman Anderson and Dean Anderson (2010) and the Prosci team (2006).

Organizational change management has been severely underused in Romania, most of the managers and leaders, both from public and private organizations, overlooking the advantages and added value that effective change management can bring to the overall strategic management of the company. In this context, the paper aimed to identify the Romanian industries and sub-industries that could benefit the most from change management done in a proper way.

To get a more analytical grasp on change management need in Romania an analysis was carried out on a sample of most important 37,000 Romanian companies from 174 sub-industries, grouped into 34 industries, by analysing economic parameters post financial crisis (2008-2013), in order to identify the areas that offer the biggest opportunities to change. The economic sectors are ranked using an aggregated indicator of risk (variation), each industry / sub-industry being correlated with a risk level.

The main results indicate some industries (ex. Real Estate, Beverages, Constructions, Media and Tourism) presenting the highest risk coefficient, over 8.2. These industries would best benefit from the effective management of change (mostly related to the managerial skill set), being the most vulnerable to the post crisis environment. Further and more detailed analysis shows that the following sub-industries: Newspapers publishing, Paint production, Trading of non-food products, Real estate agencies, Glass and ceramic production are among those that register the highest risk coefficient, over 6.4. These sub-industries are highly affected by technology and market changes, and would also reduce their risk by applying state of the art change management models and practices.

Overall, the paper proposes that the effective management of organizational change would benefit not only individual organizations by raising competitiveness, but also by reducing the economic and development gap between Romania and the rest of EU countries.

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